

NATURALISM versus MIRACLES OR MECHANISTIC UNIVERSE versus ONE THAT IS MORE THAN A MACHINE

The universe may be called a closed mechanistic system. If that is what it is then it is a collection of such systems. That is the most accurate way to describe it. One system is that bricks in this world fall and don't float. Another is that dogs don't have kittens. Another one is that dogs don't have chickens. And so on ad infinitum.

Religion suggests in a world of strange purposes that if God needed to save us by making male dog give birth to a calf that there are no real closed systems. A system that acts a certain way because it is left alone is not really a closed system.

Religion calls our dog having the calf a miracle. When God allows such seemingly random evil and suffering for his plan anything is possible. In fact a miracle being too neat should be an argument against it being real.

Religion may say that the term laws of nature only describes the normal and usual course of nature. They just describe how things work when nothing interferes or gets in the way. When we talk about the laws we are being descriptive. They are descriptive laws not prescriptive. This may not preclude exceptions but it does not preclude non-exceptions either We are talking regulation not law.

[But just because nature is normal and usual to our observation does not mean those terms are appropriate to it. There could be scores of miracles and maybe one big miracle is covering them up so that everything is papered over. When you look at it this way miracles cannot feed off evidence and then abuse it that way. It is not then evidence being good enough for miracles that concerns us now. It is evidence being allowed to be evidence.]

But the fact remains that a descriptive law may also be a prescriptive one. They are different but one law can be both. A body of law can be both all the way.

Notice what the believers are doing? They are defining the universe in terms of a regularity that allows for miracles. This is more about wanting to believe there are exceptions than in believing in anything else. It is an abuse of evidence to make it about what you want to believe. It is more important for them to assume nature has exceptions than it having none supposing it really has none. What they want to believe matters more than the truth.

For the next discussion remember that matter means material stuff and spirit means that which exists but has no body or material side. Spirit goes with religion.

Christians are biased against David Hume the philosopher who said miracles cannot be taken seriously for they see him as saying the universe is a closed system so dead men die and there is no power that can or will get involved to bring anybody back. This view is called naturalism. They don't like it for it reduces everything ultimately to the forces of chance and luck to impersonal material things. Even order in the universe happened to just come about and there is no supernatural being or God to organise it. The problem is it reduces all things to material mechanical things. Their problem is with the mechanical. But if there are supernatural spirits who says they are intelligent complex beings? Maybe they are just non-material atoms. Maybe a spirit being who is a person is a collection of spiritual mechanical things as much as they would be if they were made of matter? If you want to avoid a mechanical view of reality that has no loving gods or God in it then positing spirits and supernatural only shifts the problem. It does not solve it. You can have a supernatural worldview and still be in all essentials, the same mentality and outlook as a naturalist. In other words, a world or dimension made of spirit can be as naturalistic and impersonal as one made of matter.

Spirit and religion do not have a monopoly on things being more than things. Spirit however is marketed as being special and a real practical alternative by religious and spiritual careerists.

Who says that if nature allows exceptions that the supernatural does? It could be as bad as nature or worse. Maybe the supernatural decrees as well that dead men don't rise and witches don't raise storms. Maybe it decrees that dead men don't rise unless witches raise them? We know nothing about it.

Bottom line: a person can believe in spirits in a materialistic way. The supernatural only makes the doubts Hume raised about miracles far deeper.